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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KUWAIT 000475

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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI. NSC FOR RAMCHAND, LONDON FOR TSOU,
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KU](#) [NATIONAL](#) [ASSEMBLY](#)
SUBJECT: CORRECTED COPY -- AMIR APPROVES NEW CABINET: SHI'A
AND ICM GAIN; PRO-REFORM MINISTERS RE-APPOINTED

REF: KUWAIT 453

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

CORRECTED COPY OF KUWAIT 467 TO AMEND MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS.

¶1. (C) Summary: Amir Shaykh Sabah approved on February 9 a new Cabinet, which was particularly notable for the appointment of a second Shi'a minister and one of the leaders of the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait. The appointments likely indicate Shaykh Sabah's desire to build unity in the new Government by co-opting Kuwait's different political communities. The re-appointments of the Minister of Planning Dr. Ma'souma Al-Mubarak, Kuwait's first female minister, and Minister of Information Dr. Anas Al-Rashaid are also significant and may indicate Shaykh Sabah's support for their reform policies. While there were a number of changes in the Cabinet, few are likely to significantly affect Kuwaiti government (GOK) policy, which will still be directed by Shaykh Sabah. The new Cabinet does not indicate any willingness to patch up poor relations with the Salem branch. Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Salem Al-Sabah is the only representative in the new Government. End summary.

Shi'a and ICM Gain; Salems Lose Big

¶2. (C) On February 9, the Amir approved a new Cabinet, in which Kuwait's minority Shi'a population and the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM) saw significant gains. The appointments suggest Amir Shaykh Sabah is trying to co-opt different political communities in Kuwait into the new Government, most notably the Shi'a and moderate Islamists. The Cabinet formation comes two days after the Amir appointed former Interior Minister and his half-brother Shaykh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as Crown Prince and former Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs (a non-Cabinet ministerial-position) Shaykh Nasser Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as Prime Minister (reftel). The two appointments, particularly that of the Prime Minister, were somewhat unexpected and indicate a continuation of Shaykh Sabah's dominance of political decision-making power in Kuwait; both Shaykhs Nawaf and Nasser are seen as very loyal to the Amir.

¶3. (C) While there were a number of changes in the new Cabinet, none will likely significantly impact GOK policy, which will still be directed by Shaykh Sabah. There were, however, several significant appointments with broad political implications. First, the appointment of former Chairman of Parliament's Financial and Economic Affairs Committee Dr. Yousef Al-Zalzalah, a moderate Shi'a member of Parliament, as Minister of Commerce will be welcomed by Kuwait's minority Shi'a community (approximately 30% of the

population), which has complained of under-representation in the Government. (Note: Minister of Planning and State Minister for Administrative Development Dr. Ma'souma Al-Mubarak, the only female in the Government, was also the only Shi'a in the previous Cabinet. End note.) With Al-Zalzal's appointment and the fact that former Justice Minister MP Ahmed Baqer was not re-appointed, there will still be a total of 65 voting members of Parliament: 49 elected MPs and 16 Government Ministers.

¶4. (C) Second, the appointment of Dr. Ismail Al-Shatti, a former MP and head of the ICM's Ideological and "Civilizational" Dialogue Office, as Minister of Communications is a major gain for the ICM, which is the most organized and active political association in Kuwait. (Note: Dr. Ismail Al-Shatti recently told Poloff the Ideological and Civilizational Dialogue Office is really the ICM's Foreign Relations Office, but could not be titled such without angering the Government, which does not officially recognize political parties. End note.) The ICM's Political Relations Chief, Mohammed Al-Dallal, told Poloff February 8 that Al-Shatti has very good relations with Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser Mohammed. Al-Shatti's appointment may indicate the association's rising social and political influence.

¶5. (C) Another potentially significant appointment was Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Salem Al-Sabah's elevation to the position of Deputy Prime Minister, in addition to Foreign Minister. The only member of the Salem branch in the new Government, Shaykh Dr. Mohammed's "promotion" is more likely a recognition of his strong support for Shaykh Sabah during the recent leadership crisis than it is an indication of increased power. Ahmed Deyain, a liberal writer and an expert on ruling family politics, told Poloff February 8 that

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Shaykh Dr. Mohammed had missed his opportunity and predicted he would gradually lose political influence.

Pro-Reform Ministers Re-Appointed

¶6. (C) The re-appointment of Minister of Planning Dr. Ma'souma Al-Mubarak and Minister of Information Dr. Anas Al-Rashaid, both strong advocates of reform policies, may indicate Shaykh Sabah supports their policies. Al-Rashaid, who championed a new press law and proposed a sweeping re-organization of the Ministry of Information, may now have the political momentum to implement his reforms. Dr. Ma'souma recently outlined an ambitious and progressive five-year plan, which was widely praised. Her re-appointment may signal the Amir's willingness to move forward in implementing this plan.

Details of New Cabinet

¶7. (U) The new Cabinet is as follows:

- Minister of Interior, Minister of Defense, and First Deputy Prime Minister: Shaykh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (Note: Shaykh Jaber was previously Deputy PM and Defense Minister; the Interior Ministry was led by now Crown Prince Shaykh Nawaf. End note);
- Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister: Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah;
- Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, and Deputy Prime Minister: Mohammed Dhaifallah Sharar;
- Minister of Health: Shaykh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah (Note: Previously Shaykh Ahmed was both Health and Communications Minister. End note.);

- Minister of Energy: Shaykh Ahmed Al-Fahd Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah;
- Minister of Communications: Dr. Ismail Khudhur Al-Shatti;
- Minister of Information: Dr. Anas Mohammed Ahmed Al-Rashaid;
- Minister of Finance: Bader Mishari Al-Humaidhi;
- Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs: Bader Nasser Al-Humaidi;
- Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education: Dr. Adel Taleb Al-Tabtabaei (Note: Dr. Adel is a Salafi Islamist. End note.);
- Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs: Dr. Abdullah Abdul-Rahman Al-Ma'atouq (Note: Dr. Abdullah was the former Awqaf Minister; MP Ahmed Baqer, who was not re-appointed to the Cabinet, was the Justice Minister. End note.);
- Minister of State for Municipality Affairs: Abdullah Saud Al-Muhailbi;
- Minister of Social Affairs and Labor: Shaykh Ali Jarrah Sabah Al-Sabah (Note: Shaykh Ali is not well known to the Embassy and a surprising choice for MOSAL Minister given his extensive background in banking. He most recently served as chairman of the BMB Investment Bank based in Bahrain and held various positions at the Burgan Bank, Kuwait Finance House, and other institutions. His appointment suggests he played a role in the succession discussions. End note.);
- Minister of Planning and Minister of State for Administrative Development Affairs: Dr. Ma'souma Al-Mubarak;
- Minister of Commerce and Industry: Dr. Yousef Sayed Hassan Al-Zalzalah.

18. (U) Updated biographic information will soon be available on post's website.

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